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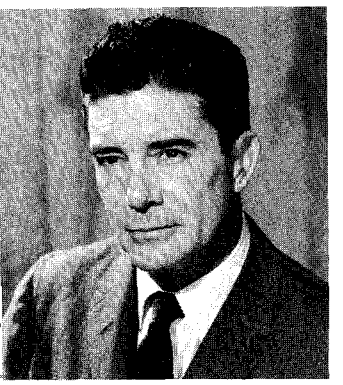

DAN SMOOT

RACE WARS, U.S.A. - PART I

NEWARK

Saturday night, July 8, 1967, 19 persons were hurt in a brawl between Newark, New Jersey, police and a gang of Black Muslin Negroes. City officials and local "civil rights" leaders behaved as if it were a routine affair.

Wednesday night, July 12, Newark police arrested a Negro taxi driver for assaulting an officer. A rampaging mob of Negroes stormed the police station, threw fire bombs and rocks at it, pillaged nearby liquor stores and other business establishments. Police Director Dominick Spina called this affray an "isolated incident." He issued helmets to besieged police officers, but ordered them to stay inside while he and anti-poverty workers tried to calm the mob.

The mob would not be calmed.

By midnight Thursday, July 13, a mile-long section of Newark was in utter ruin. Negro snipers were shooting from hidden nests and moving automobiles; but police were not given orders to "fire if necessary" until about 1:00 a. m. Friday, July 14.

On July 14, New Jersey Governor Richard J. Hughes declared a state of emergency and sent the national guard into Newark, saying the city was in the grip of "a criminal insurrection by people who say they hate the white man but who really hate America." President Johnson volunteered federal troops, but the governor declined.

When the Newark riots were reduced to scattered sniping, fire-bombing, and looting on July 17, downtown sections looked like a bombed-out city. Twenty-four people had been killed, more than 650 injured, more than 1000 arrested, and more than 30 million dollars' worth of property destroyed.

As the violence began to subside in Newark, marauding bands of Negroes spread the fire-bombing, looting, and murdering to nearby New Jersey cities: Orange, East Orange, Englewood, Plainfield.

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PLAINFIELD

On Sunday, July 16, a gang of Negroes had raided an arms plant at Middlesex, New Jersey, and had stolen 46 carbines of the type used by the U. S. Army. These were the guns Negroes used in Plainfield.

The 15,000 Negroes in Plainfield compose about one-fourth the total population, and live in comfortable homes with no problems of congestion, joblessness, bad housing. Negroes are on the city council, and the city government has done everything possible to please the Negro population. There was no incident to trigger the riot in Plainfield. It just erupted, and raged out of control until national guardsmen and state troopers moved in. A white policeman was disarmed, beaten, and killed with his own gun. More than 30 persons were injured. Some 90 stores owned by whites were burned and looted. One Plainfield official said:

"It happened out of sheer, savage hatred, fanned and exploited by Negroes who are dedicated to a war against the white race."(1)

He asked that his name be withheld because "we are living here in the shadow of blackmail — threats by Negroes to tear the whole city apart the next time."(1)

After guardsmen and state troopers moved in, Negro riot leaders met with Plainfield city officials, demanding that the guardsmen and troopers be withdrawn, that arrested looters and other "minor offenders" be released without bail, and that Negro charges of police brutality and other grievances be investigated. Negro leaders said that if their demands were not met they would "tear this town apart." "Is that a threat?" asked one reporter. "This is no threat, baby," replied a Negro. "It's a promise."(2)

Plainfield city officials knuckled under — releasing most of the arrested Negroes and ordering guardsmen and troopers out of the city. Negroes promised to stop the rioting and return all the semi-automatic carbines stolen on July 16 from the munitions plant in Middlesex. The guns were not returned; and another riot was barely averted when guardsmen and troopers moved back into the Negro section of Plainfield to make a house-to-house search for the weapons — few of which were found.

DETROIT

In the early morning hours of Sunday, July 23, 1967, police raided an illegal vice den on 12th Street in the Negro section near downtown Detroit, arresting 73 persons. A violent mob gathered. While some Negroes harassed police by throwing objects at them and jeering, others fire-bombed and looted nearby stores. Under orders from Mayor Jerome P. Cavanagh and Police Commissioner Ray Girardin to avoid shooting or any other action that might give rise to charges of police brutality, police were anxious not to inflame the mob. In an effort to contain the violence, they tried to cordon off six blocks of 12th Street, largely ignoring the pillaging, arson, and vandalism going on in that area.

The commotion attracted growing crowds of Negroes, who quickly realized that police were not trying to arrest arsonists and thieves, or even stop them. Later, Negro children and others said they knew Mayor Cavanagh would not let the police shoot. So, in a carnival-like atmosphere, hundreds of Negro spectators — mostly young people — joined the fire-bombing and looting, while others laughed and cheered them on. Violence quickly broke through police lines and spread all over downtown Detroit. Concealed snipers fired on police from all directions and drove off fire-fighting crews.

All day long Sunday, July 23, Detroit police — under orders not to shoot — gave ground before wild mobs and ignored most of the looting. Mayor Cavanagh notified Michigan Governor George Romney, who sent state police troopers and national guardsmen to help.

President Johnson first heard about the Detroit race riot from the FBI at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, July 23, 1967. Legally, the President could do nothing until he got a formal request for help from Governor Romney. Johnson was quick to act *illegally*

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in March, 1965, when he ordered federal troops to protect race-agitators, rioters, pimps, prostitutes, communists, and other human scum whom Martin Luther King, Jr., led in that prolonged orgy of sex and drunkenness known as the Selma-to-Montgomery "march" — just as Eisenhower quickly sent troops illegally to Little Rock in 1957 to protect race-agitators, and as Kennedy quickly sent troops illegally in September, 1962, to protect one race agitator in Oxford, Mississippi.

But Johnson was extremely reluctant to send federal troops *against* Negro rioters in Detroit. After all, Johnson has done everything in his power to convince Negroes that they are oppressed by whites and that they should demonstrate against their oppressors until all their demands are met; he has spent billions of tax dollars and has violated the constitutional rights of all Americans to prove that he is the discontented Negro's best friend; and he got 94% of the Negro vote in 1964. He was not about to sacrifice all that political advantage to help a Republican governor who wants to be his political opponent in 1968. So, when Johnson first heard about the Detroit riots on Sunday afternoon, July 23, he took refuge in legality and did nothing.

Sunday night, July 23, Negro mobs in Detroit ignored the 9 o'clock curfew the mayor had proclaimed; and violence grew andspread. Romney, after a tour of the city by helicopter, said:

"It looks like bombing and shelling . . . . The situation is out of control. It's a case of lawlessness and hoodlumism and apparently not organized. Disobedience to the law cannot and will not be tolerated in Michigan. I will supply whatever manpower the city needs to handle the situation."(3)

At the time Romney made those remarks, however, he had permitted only 600 national guardsmen and 200 state police troopers to enter the embattled area. More than 2000 other national guardsmen and some 200 other troopers had been mobilized, but were under orders to stand by "for possible action." And the Detroit police were still under orders not to shoot.

Romney, like Johnson, had a political problem. Romney also has done what he can to convince Negroes they are oppressed by whites and has encouraged them to demonstrate until their demands are met. Four years ago, on June 29, 1963 — when a wave of racial unrest and demonstrations was sweeping southern Michigan — Governor Romney, uninvited, joined racial agitators in Detroit and marched with them, in sweat-soaked shirt sleeves, through the streets in protest against what Negro agitators claimed to be housing discrimination in Detroit suburbs. On March 27, 1965, Governor Romney proclaimed a state of mourning for two days in Michigan for Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, a Detroit housewife who had left her husband and 5 children in Detroit to go to Alabama and participate in the Selma-to-Montgomery "march." The night the "march" ended, Mrs. Liuzzo (returning by car to Selma, accompanied by one of her fellow-marchers, a 19-year-old Negro barber) was shot and killed on the highway.

Romney, as hungry for Negro votes as Johnson, was equally loath to send troops against Negro rioters.

By 6:30 a.m. Monday, July 24, however, Romney had moved in all available manpower. But 10,000 guardsmen and police could not contain the violence. Fires engulfed entire blocks of downtown Detroit; a few whites had joined in the looting; and the anarchy was still growing and spreading fast.

Monday morning, as the second day of rioting progressed, Romney made 5 telephone calls to U. S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark in Washington: at 2:40, at 3:30, at 5:15, at 6:50, and at 9:45. Clark notified the President on each occasion, and the President ordered federal troops alerted at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Romney did not actually send a telegram to the President formally requesting troops until 10:45 a.m. Monday, July 24, about 34 hours after violence began. Johnson did not order troops into

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Detroit until about 11:50 p.m. Monday, 13 hours after receiving Romney's request. The troops (which earlier in the day, had been moved from North Carolina and Kentucky) were waiting at Selfridge Air Force Base, 30 miles from Detroit, and did not enter the embattled area until the early morning of Tuesday, July 25. President Johnson reluctantly gave the order to commit the troops, and then rushed before television cameras to apologize for what he had done and to place the blame on Romney. In a midnight speech that lasted only 7 minutes, Johnson mentioned 7 *times* that *Romney* had initiated the move for federal troops, because *Romney* was "unable to bring the situation under control."

Later, Attorney General Clark and the President blamed the President's delay on Romney, by saying that Romney did not ask for federal troops in his first 4 telephone calls on Monday morning and that, in his fifth call at 9:45, he merely said he was thinking about asking for troops. Romney, however, said he requested troops about 3:00 a.m. on Monday.

Obviously, all three — Romney, Clark and Johnson — are dodging the truth. Romney kept calling the Attorney General, without making a formal request for troops, evidently hoping that Johnson would take the initiative to send them. Johnson — who had volunteered federal troops for the Democrat governor of New Jersey a week before — would not send them to Detroit until Republican Governor Romney made a formal, written request — and then delayed for 13 hours while Detroit burned.

After U. S. paratroopers moved into Detroit on Tuesday, July 25, 1967, considerable violence continued. Several buildings were fire-bombed; paratroopers were fired on by snipers; one sniper was killed; three policemen were wounded; but Governor Romney began withdrawing national guardsmen for duty in other Michigan cities where Negro violence was boiling.

By Wednesday, July 26, 1967, the race war in Detroit had simmered down to sporadic gun battles between snipers and guardsmen and police on the west side, with only occasional fire-bombing and looting occurring. The U. S. paratroopers whom Johnson had sent in to help were patrolling the relatively quiet east side, and Governor Romney was saying testily that "they" (federal authorities), not he, had made the decision to keep the paratroopers out of the west side where the rioting continued. Thirty-six people had been killed. More than 1000 persons had been injured. Blood banks had been depleted. Estimates of property damage ranged from $500 million to $1 billion.

On Friday, July 28, snipers were still taking pot shots at national guardsmen who were under orders to keep their rifles unloaded until fired upon.

By July 30 — after a week of turmoil — the death toll in Detroit was 41; property damage was almost beyond estimation; there still were pockets of violence; and some national guardsmen were still in the city; but it could be said the Detroit riot was over.

During that week, about 40 other American cities were scarred — some of them deeply — by Negro violence.

NEXT WEEK: MORE ON THE RACE WARS.

FOOTNOTES

(1) "The Real Tragedy of Newark," *U. S. News & World Report*, July 31, 1967, p. 31

(2) *Time*, July 28, 1967, p. 9

(3) AP dispatch from Detroit, *The Dallas Morning News*, July 24, 1967, p. A1

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